

Armory Arts District Study Group Meeting MINUTES

November 2nd, 2011

In attendance: Brian Platt; Sally Strachan; Linda Cohen; Mark House; Jessica Ann Weinstein; Judy Miller; Linda Dewing; Silvia Acosta; Thomas Mann; Michael Davolio; Chris Ladds; Don Keel; Richard Kazarian, Yvonne Seggerman

Meeting commenced at 11:39 a.m.

1. Welcome and introductions

Sylvia Acosta, RISD professor, who lives across the street in Riverfront Lofts – she will have 70 architecture students next spring in a project in the Pawtucket area.

a. minutes of the last meeting, January 19, 2011

Please note that the February 2011 meeting never occurred

Motion to approve minutes of last meeting; motion passed.

b. Welcome new neighbors

Brian Thibeault, new Armory owner was hoping to join us today but might not be able to, given his other business. We will try to make sure we schedule the next meeting around his schedule so he can come and talk about the armory plans.

Chris Ladds, LLB Architects, new owner across the street.

1. Recap of last season's work – Yvonne Seggerman – Armory Arts District is a Cluster

“Unique to Pawtucket” handout – small geographical area with opportunities for growth, focus, and development.

AREA ASSETS

- **Riverfront**
- **Arts and Design**
- **Public Education**
- **Acclaimed theater company**
- **Historic preservation**
- **Non profit**
- **For profit**
- **Residential – long standing**
- **Residential – new**
- **Artist live/work**
- **Brownfields**

How do we stabilize the district and protect it from erosion?

How do we make clear the public value of our cluster to the City and to all of Southeastern New England - What can we do to improve the neighborhood?

What is missing?

Will we commit to work together to keep it going in the right direction?

Conversation turned to the size of the district and if the boundaries are fixed. Several other properties might be appropriate additions.

Group made decision to continue this discussion about a possible expansion. Richard Kazarian mentioned the new Chinese School starting up across the river from the district.

2. Statistics sheets

“What is measured, succeeds” Property owners in this group, please fill in your raw data on the properties grid. Jessica Ann (Yvonne’s intern) will collect and compile data. Linda Dewing will represent the Riverfront Lofts for the purposes of this data collection.

Thomas Mann shared that this data will be a valuable addition to the narrative we use to appeal to grants and other funding.

Mark House asked that we restate our goals. The mission informs the boundaries.

Yvonne’s intern, Jessica Ann Weinstein will follow up with all property owners to acquire as much data as building owners feel comfortable revealing.

We will be making charts that can be used by the City of Pawtucket and Pawtucket Foundation for grants and other purposes.

3. Report from City Department of Planning and Redevelopment – Michael Davolio, Director

The city has completed the Brownfields Remediation project on the Riverfront; purchased 3 vacant lots for \$1 and fixed environmental problems.

Coordination on the bike path issue is still up for discussion.

Trying to put together sustainable business model for the Visitor's Center; there has been a 50% budget cut so we may have to close the center; in order to keep the center open, we want it to generate more revenue in the following ways: tours need a better reason to stay longer rather than just pass through; bring in more school groups; do more to connect the center to support of local arts, perhaps sell Gamm tickets and Mixed Magic tickets; essentially, make the Visitor's Center a central advertising hub. The RI Film Collaborative has signed a lease. The RIPTA bus terminal is problematic for other tenants and visitors in the building; we asked if they might close that terminal and have just a bus stop there instead.

4. Report from Mark House, Blackstone Pawtucket, LLC

a. Bike Path - the most recent discussion have determined that we want to keep it where it is but we are still deciding where it should end; the plans are moving along. There is money available for the design (not construction) of the path but we must establish and approve a route first. This may take up to 5 years to work out the details. We are now down to the tricky issues at the core of this project; the Armory Study Group's opinion may hold some value, therefore this committee should continue to include the bike path in its discussions.

Michael Davolio – people assume it will be a recreational trail; however we should really highlight public access and the commuter aspect of the trail as well.

Thomas Mann – This group is in a good position to take a stance on

the route/layout of the path; the issue needs a study group like ours to submit ideas in writing.

This group may submit email questions and ideas to Mark House. Mark will work with his team of engineers and bring a proposal to this group's next meeting so we can develop a more concrete plan and take the time to develop one consolidated voice from this neighborhood.

b. Riverfront – Michael Davolio – we have funding to make improvements along Exchange Street; potential for more on-street parking. This will not interfere with the bike path.

5. Pawtucket Foundation Riverfront Corridor Plan – Thomas Mann

There are millions of dollars in investments in this area, including across the river and Roosevelt Ave.

The Pawtucket Foundation is expending a state-wide grant for downtown design plan: make key routes accessible to 2-way traffic; landscaping and other ways to open riverfront access

There are immediate development opportunities; the question is how to leverage private development to help the public areas, while still benefitting the private?

People are sometimes turned off by graffiti and other undesirable physical aspects of Pawtucket, some are even afraid to drive through Pawtucket to get to the “gems” such as the Gamm Theatre. We must leverage the resources at hand.

Owners of 5 key sites have come together to try to develop a project

without taking too much of a financial risk. We determined that we must create more attractions and value. We have applied for grants, this project will need about \$300,000; we have raised about one third of the money and we are prepared to begin the market analysis phase. The overall process will take about 12-18 months.

Thomas requested that this group could each write a support letter to help fundraising efforts.

Richard Kazarian – no matter how talented the consultants and architects are, they are reliant on how good the client is; the best client pushes to new limits and wants the best out of the consultant/architect's work. It is an inspired/attractive prospect that the Armory's purpose has changed so drastically from the original to now; these types of stories set the standard for the best results.

Don Keel – people typically want to get on board with the projects that have higher standards and goals, even if the project is more expensive. Therefore, let's play up that side of our project when asking people to get involved, let them know we won't settle for average on this project.

Thomas Mann – confident that we can get the money we need for the talent we want; the challenge is to find a client at the level we want.

One key thing is developer cultivation.

6. Meetings Schedule

We don't need to meet once every month, but should meet more frequently than once a quarter. We will meet on the first Wednesday of every other month, 11:00am.

Note that we will meet this December for an additional meeting so

that Brian Thibeault can attend. **NEXT MEETING: Wednesday
December 7, 2011 at 11 a.m.**

7. Other Business

Yvonne Seggerman – Considering stepping down as chairperson of this group because the Gamm is now a tenant of this building; the group should be represented by an owner rather than a tenant. In addition to finding a new chair, this group should come up with a slate of officers in the next few months. Richard Kazarian – as the shift in Armory ownership is still recent, Yvonne should consider postponing her decision.

Please come to see Hamlet at the Gamm.

**When Deb Cylke is able to join us we would love to talk about interns from Tolman working in
our respective businesses.**

Brian Platt encouraged folks to support the Lions Club.

**Michael Davolio congratulated Brian Platt for his appointment as
Co-Chair of the Pawtucket
Arts Festival.**

Motion to adjourn; motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

**Minutes respectfully submitted by Jessica Ann Weinstein Minutes
Approved 12-7-11**